LITERARY NOTES

Prosodic metres as used in Iqbal's Urdu and Persian poetry

By Rauf Parekh

CRITICAL evaluation of Allama Muhammad Iqbal's poetry began in the early 1900s when Sheikh Abdul Qadir's article on Iqbal appeared in May 1902 issue of *Khadang-i-Nazar*, an Urdu magazine published from Lucknow. Since then a century and a quarter have elapsed and critics and researchers have amassed an enormous number of articles and books on Iqbal's life and his poetry.

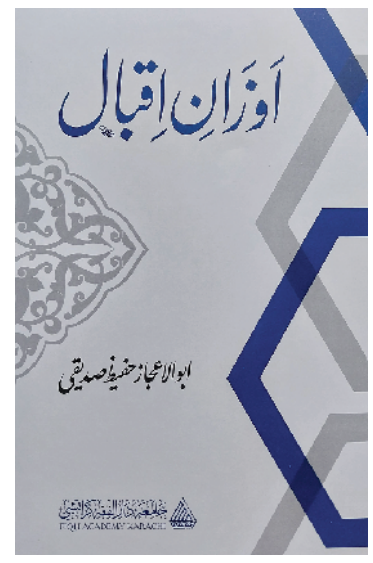
The endeavours to understand Iqbal and his poetry are still going on and no year passes by without a few books being published on Iqbal. This year, too, is no exception. Among the recently published books on Iqbal, one brings up a perspective on Iqbal which is rarely discussed: prosodic metres and how Iqbal has made use of them in his Urdu and Persian poetry.

Titled *Auzaan-i-Iqbal*, or the prosodic metres Iqbal used in his poetry, it is in fact the much-needed reprint of the book by Abul Ejaz Hafeez Siddiqi (1930-2006), an educator, researcher and poet from Okara, Punjab. First published in 1983, the book covers a topic that has largely been ignored by critics and one of the reasons is that only those with a command over *ilm-i-arooz*, or prosody — the study of metrical structures and rhythms in poetry — can analyse the prosodic features and peculiarities of a poet, as the subject is often considered too complex.

Hafeez Siddiqi not only had mastery over prosody but also knew how to explain the complex art of prosody in an easy-to-understand manner. In the beginning, the author has done some wonderful work for common readers to make them understand the book by explaining the terms used in prosody as well as certain aspects of metres, genres, forms of poetry and terms useful in understanding Iqbal's prosodic metres.

The author has listed each and every first line from Iqbal's Urdu and Persian ghazals and poems — and other genres and poetic forms, such as, *do baiti*, masnavi, *qit'a*, *tarkeeb band* — mentioning the specific prosodic metre (*behr*) in which they are composed. He has also mentioned the variations of a metre in vogue and their technical names, along with each part of the metre known as *rukn*, or rhythmic unit, which is called, in English, 'foot of a poetic line'. A list of metres used by Iqbal is given in an appendix, with each of the metres assigned a serial number. This number is mentioned in the relevant sections, thus avoiding the repetition of a metre's name and metrical units.

The book, published by Karachi's Fiqh Academy, is helpful in many ways. For instance, if we want to know which of Iqbal's poems or ghazals are in a specific metre, say *behr-i-ramal* or *behr-i-hazaj*, a chapter in the book can guide us to find the answer and it also mentions the



name of Iqbal's poetic collection that includes that specific poem or ghazal. Another chapter offers the key to find which of Iqbal's books, for instance *Baang-i-Dara*, has poems composed in a specific metre. It lists each and every poem and ghazal in *Baang-i-Dara* in a sequence as given in the book and mentions the prosodic metre. Poems in other works by Iqbal have been listed in a similar way. A chapter shows how many prosodic metres, and which ones, Iqbal has used in a specific book.

Metrical analysis in the book covers Iqbal's each and every poetic collection, whether in Urdu or Persian, and they are: *Baang-i-Dara, Baal-i-Jibreel, Zarb-i-Kaleem, Armughaan-i-Hijaaz, Asrar-i-Khudi, Rumooz-i-Bekhudi, Payam-i-Mashriq, Zaboor-i-Ajam, Javed Nama, Pas Che Bayad Kard Aye Aqvaam-i-Mashriq* and *Masnavi Musaafir*.

Some useful appendices in the book present some charts, making it easy for the reader to find certain things at a glance. In an appendix is given a list of the prosodic metres used by Iqbal in each of his book, for example, Iqbal has used 20 different metres in *Baang-i-Dara* and 19 in *Baal-i-Jibreel*. Another list shows how many times a specific metre was used in Iqbal's different books, for instance, Iqbal has used *behr-i-ramal* in seven of his books and *behr-i-mujtas* in nine books. All in all, Iqbal has used 24 different metres and their variations in his Urdu and Persian poetic works. The author has taken some real pains to determine the metres used in each and every poetic form or genre by Iqbal in each of his book, mentioning precise numbers every time.

The last chapter analyses Iqbal's use of metres and draws some conclusions. It truly offers some insights into Iqbal's use of metres. For instance, *behr-i-ramal* and *behr-i-hazaj* are among Iqbal's most favourite metres in Urdu and masnavi most used form in his Persian works. Also, Iqbal had been experimenting with the poetic forms right from the beginning.

HRCP deplores haste in tabling 27th Amendment

LAHORE: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed serious concern over the manner in which the 27th Amendment to the Constitution is being presented in Parliament.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the HRCP deplored the government's haste in tabling the amendment, noting the absence of meaningful consultation with the political opposition, the wider legal fraternity, and civil society. The commission stated that this lack of due process calls into question the very intention behind the amendment bill.

The reported content of the amendment has caused alarm among various groups. The proposed changes are said to include numerous provisions to reconfigure the judicial system, a concentration of power in specific offices that would cede more civilian space, and the grant of lifelong immunity to certain state offices.

Constitutionalists, the legal fraternity, human rights defenders, and others who believe in the independence of the judiciary and the tenets of civilian supremacy in a democracy have been alarmed by these reported provisions.

In response, the HRCP has announced plans to hold an urgent consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. The purpose of this consultation will be to examine the proposed amendment and its potential far-reaching impact on the country's polity and society.

PA SPEAKER: Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan has called for a transparent dialogue on the proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment, which has already been tabled in the Senate.

Talking to the media on Sunday, he termed dialogue essential to strengthen the credibility of the parliament.

Referring to the change in higher courts judges' appointment being suggested in the amendment, he said the parliamentary oversight of judicial appointments and accountability would enhance the parliament's stature.

Responding to a question on defence and security matters, he appreciated the services of the armed forces, noting that ensuring national integrity and public protection was everyone's primary responsibility.

The speaker attended a ceremony of a private college and addressing the participants he said he would speak from the heart to the young generation. He said guiding youth towards knowledge, research and character-building should be a top priority. — **Staff Reporter**

Govt mulls raise in fares of mass transit system in Lahore

PMA making plan to increase fares of Orange Line, metro bus and feeder buses; govt spends Rs21bn on subsidy each year on mass transit systems in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan

By Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The Punjab Masstransit Authority (PMA)—a subsidiary of the Transport and Masstransit Department—is working out a plan to increase fares of the Lahore Orange Line Metro Train, Lahore Metro Bus Service (Green Line) and all feeder routes.

A working paper, in this regard, is likely to be submitted in the upcoming meeting of the authority, *Dawn* has learnt.

"The increase in the fares is the need of the hour, keeping in view the increasing operational and maintenance cost. The last increase in the fares of the Orange Line was made around two years ago. Prior to this, the metro bus fares were increased around seven years ago," a senior official of the authority explained to *Dawn* on Sunday.

"A working paper, in this regard, is likely to be submitted in the upcoming meeting of the authority," the official, requesting anonymity, said, adding that the current fares of the Peshawar Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) system were also higher than Lahore.

The Orange Line Metro Train Project in Lahore was launched in 2015 during the tenure of the then PML-N government. Since its commercial operation was scheduled to begin in 2018, it couldn't be done due to various political, legal and administrative issues during the PTI government tenure that started in 2018. However, after a delay of two years, the project was completed finally with start of commercial operation in October, 2020. Similarly, the Lahore Metro Bus Service was completed in 2013, a couple of months before the 2013 general election. At the time of the launch, the metro bus fare was fixed as Rs20 for the entire 27km long route (Gajjumata to Shahdara). It was increased to Rs30 in 2018. Similarly, the Orange Line fares were increased in December 2023 from Rs40 to Rs45 with introduction of distance-based fares (Rs5 increase after every four stations).

"Once approved by the authority, the summary for increase (Rs30 to Rs40 for Metro Bus, Rs45 to Rs50 for Orange Line and Rs5 for the feeder routes/Speedo buses) in the fares would be moved to the chief minister through the transport department. After approval by the CM, the case would be submitted to the cabinet for final approval after which the new fares would be enforced," the officer said while explaining the procedure in this regard.

To a question, the official said the total subsidy being given by the government for Lahore Orange Line, metro bus and Speedo buses and metro bus projects in Rawalpindi/Islamabad and Multan is amounting to Rs21bn annually and the fares currently being charged hardly contributed around 24pc of the total cost incurring on the operation and maintenance. It means that the government is bearing over 75pc expenditures of these projects. He added that previously, the fares contribution percentage was 32pc that dropped to 24pc due to increase in the operation and maintenance cost.

"The subsidy being provided for the Lahore Orange Line amounts to Rs8bn annually as the electricity cost is a major expense of this project. Rs2.75bn are being provided as subsidy for Lahore metro bus, followed by Rs2.5bn for the transport system on feeder routes (Speedo bus etc)," he said while responding to a question revealed and added that the increase in fare might help the government in bringing down the subsidy amount.

Faisal Shadi Khel wins prepared category of Thal Jeep Rally

By Imran Gabol/Tariq Saeed Birmani

LAHORE/DERA GHAZI KHAN: The 10th Thal Jeep Rally concluded on Sunday after four days of events in the Thal desert. The rally, organised by the Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab (TDCP), covered the areas in Muzaffargarh, Layyah, Kot Addu and Jhang districts.

Over 100 racers from across Pakistan participated in various categories. The rally included three main competition categories: Stock, Prepared and Women. The stock and prepared categories were further divided into four sub-categories each.

Faisal Shadi Khel won the prepared category by completing the 200km track in two hours, 10 minutes and 18 seconds. Nadir Magasi secured second position with a time of two hours, 14 minutes and 57 seconds. Muhammad Raza Saeed finished third with a time of two hours, 15 minutes and 47 seconds.

In Women's Category, Salma Khan Marwat won first place while Dina Patel secured second position. Muhammadullah Marwat won the stock category.

The rally featured additional competitions including dirt bike and buggy races. Saqib Shah finished first in the dirt bike race. Fifteen riders participated in this category.

Dawn

Talking to the media, a dirt bike racer said the participants demonstrated their skills for spectators. Buggy racer Nadeem Khan noted the event's growing popularity, saying that international participants were beginning to attend it too.

Alongside the motorsports events, the organisers had arranged a musical performance and traditional games, including kabaddi, bull races, camel dances and tent pegging. Teams from various districts participated in these events.

The TDCP initiated the Cholistan Jeep Rally in 2005. The Thal Desert Rally was established following requests from residents of south Punjab for a similar event in the Thal desert. Spectators attended from multiple districts across southern Punjab. Many set up camps in the desert area to observe the events. Local vendors established temporary stalls near event locations. Services included food and transportation for attendees. The event represents part of efforts to promote tourism in southern Punjab during winter months. Officials indicate the rally will continue as an annual event. The organisers provided medical and security services throughout the four-day event. No major incidents were reported during the competitions. They stated that planning for next year's rally will begin in the coming months. The success of this year's event indicates continued interest in desert motorsports in Pakistan.

According to the provisional results, in the stock A category, Muhammadullah Marwat secured the top position by completing the distance in the shortest time of 2 hours, 27 minutes and 36 seconds. He was followed by Syed Asef Imam who finished in second place with 2 hours, 37 minutes and 45 seconds.

In the stock B category, Azmer Saranjam claimed the first place with a leading time of 2 hours, 26 minutes and 39 seconds. Muhammad Ryan Khalil finished as the runner-up, completing the route in 2 hours, 32 minutes, and 47 seconds.

The stock C category was won by Muhammad Hassan who set the fastest time of 2 hours, 37 minutes and 55 seconds. Zubair Hayat took second place with a time of 2 hours, 44 minutes and 37 seconds.

In the stock D category, Usama Haraj emerged victorious, finishing in 2 hours, 33 minutes and 48 seconds. Falak Sher followed in second place, completing the distance in 2 hours, 42 minutes and 30 seconds.

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